THE TRAGEDY OF NERO, Emperour of ROME:

As it is Acted at the

Theatre-Royal,

By His Majesties Servants.

By *Nathaniel Lee*, Gent.

LONDON,
Printed by T. R. and N. T. for *James Magnus* and *Richard Bentley*, at the *Post Office* in *Russel-street* in *Covent-Garden*, 1675.

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TO THE

Right Honourable

The Earl of

ROCHESTER.

My Lord,

POets for the most part in their Dedications miss of their design, which should be to please that Honourable Person, whose protection they desire. For what pleasure can a Noble Spirit (whose Ingenuity equals its height) receive an exorbitant Praise and ill tim'd Applause? Not that the severest Cynick should snarl at just Commendations and due En-

comiums; such was the Epistle of Horace to Augustus Plinie's Panegyrick to Trajan, which sort of ponder'd Eloquence ought to be as Grateful to a brave and elevated Mind as Adorations to the Deity. My Business having Insinuation is to pray, not to praise; and I hope I shall appear less troublesome to your Lordship under the form of a Begger, than that of a Flatterer. Your protection & favour is implor'd by this Humble Supplicant in the behalf of a Civil Tyrant, at least one whom I have so represented, and for which I have been sufficiently censur'd perhaps unjustly enough; since tis not impossible for a man to love and hate, to be brave and bad. From the Criticks, whose fury I dread those Killmen and more then Jews; I appeal to your Lordship as the Saint did to Cæsar. To you whose Judgment vies remark with your Grandeiur, who are as absolutely Lord

of *Wit* as those prevaricators are its slaves. To you who by excellent Reading and Conversation with the pleasantly wise, have justly limited the mighty Sallies of an overflowing Fancy. Whose sayings astonish the Censorious, and whose Writings are so exactly ingenious; Princes treasure them in their Memory, as things Divine. This is so far from flattery or untruth, that it appears rather an impertinent kind of asserting what every Man knows, as if I should gravely tell the World 'tis day at noon; which I had rather another should be smil'd at for, than he who is in highest Truth and lowest Humility. My Lord,

Your Lordships

Most Humble,

and Obedient Servant,

Nat. Lee.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

The Persons.

Nero,	Emperour of *Rome*	Mr. *Hart.*
Britannicus,	true Heire of the Empire,	Mr. *Mohun.*
Petronius,	*Nero's* Favorit,	Mr. *Burt.*
Otho,	husband to *Poppea*,	Mr. *Wintershal.*
Piso,	her Brother,	Mr. *Eyland.*
Seneca,	*Nero's* Tutor	Mr. *Cartwright.*
Drusillus,	*Romans*,	Mr. *Clark.*
Plautus.		Mr. *Coysh.*
Silvius.		Mr. *Watson.*
Mirmilon.		Mr. *Powell.*
Flavius.	friend to *Britannicus*	Mr. *Harris.*

Poppea,	*Otho's* Wife married to *Nero*,	Mrs. *Marshal.*
Agrippina,	The old Empress mother to *Nero.*	Mrs. *Cory.*
Octavia,	*Nero's* first wife sister of *Britannicus.*	Mr. *Cox.*
Cyara,	Princess of *Parthia*,	Mrs. of *Britannicus* Mrs. *Bowtel.*
Syllana.	*Poppea's* confident.	Mrs. *Uphel.*
Romans	Gladiators.	
Caligula's	Ghost,	Mr. *Griffin.*

The Scene Rome.

The Prologue, Spoken by Mr. Haines.

GOOD Players, and perfect Sense as scarce are grown,
As civil Women in this damn'd lewd Town.
Plain Sense, is despicable as plain Cloaths,
As English Hatts, Bone-lace, or woollen Hose;
'Tis your brisk Coo! that is your Man of Note,
Yonder he goes, in the embroider'd Coat;
Such wenching eyes, and hands so prone to ruffle,
The gentile sling, the Trip and modish shuffle;
Salt soul and flame, as gay as any Prince
Thus Tagg'd in Silks, make up your Men of Sense.
I'm told that some are present here to day,
Who e're they see, resolve to Damn this Play,
So much wou'd interest with ill nature Sway;
But Ladies, you we hope, will prove more civil,
And charm these witts that Dam beyond the Devil:
Then let each Crittick here, all Hell-inherit,
You have attrallions that can lay a Spirit.
A bloody fatal Play you'l see to night,
I vow to Gad, that put me in a fright.
The meaneſt waiter huffs, looks Big, and ſtrutts,
Gives breſt a blow, then hand on hilt he puts;
'Tis a fine Age, a tearing Thund'ring age,
Pray Heav'n, this Thund'ring does not crack the Stage:
This Play I like not now——
And yet for ought I know, it may be good,
But ſtill I have this fighting wounds, and blood,
Why, what the devil have I to do with honour,
Let Heroes Court her, I cry, Pox upon her;
All Tragedies i'Gad to me ſound odly,
I can no more be ſerious, than you Godly.

THE

THE TRAGEDY OF NERO.

ACT. I. Scæn. I.

Otho. Sylvius. Cyara, Disguis'd.

SYLVIUS.

WHy dost thou droop, and hang thy pensive head?
As if there were no end of thy distress?
His sighs more frequent than the minutes are;
Tears hang upon his cheeks, like morning dews
On Roses: Yet I cannot blame thy grief.

Otho. Sir, You amaze me with your sad relation.
That Fatal Night Prince *Alamander* fell,
I, and some more, were in our General's Tent.

(Great *Corbulus* he's call'd) who with ſucceſs,
Has often led our gallant *Roman* Troops,
Againſt your *Parthian* horſe; as I remember,
'Twas midnight when our Scouts, all pale with fear,
Came, flying, with the news of your approach:
Our General undiſturb'd, ſtraight gave Command
That every Captain ſhould his Charge perform,
With as much ſilence as was poſſible;
No Drums; no Trumpets Sounded, all was huſh'd,
Order in whiſpers, was by all receiv'd:
So your Surprize was anſwered with Surprize,
And gain'd us, without the Victory;
For 'tis our cuſtom frequently to ſleep
Whole nights in arms, never to reſt ſecure.

Cyara. Our loſs, indeed, was great; but Oh! that loſs
Of loſſes, our dear Prince, ſurpaſſes all!
For him, our Court now mourns; Sorrow, like night,
Eternal night, ſpreads horror all around:
All Noble hearts are cover'd with deſpair;
For our bright *Sun* muſt never ſhine again.
Some dawn of hope we had, he might be here
A pris'ner, and unknown; but Fate decrees
We wall not be ſo happy.

Oth. Sir, wherein
My ſervice may prove beneficial,
Or yield you any comfort, pray command it.
Captives, of every ſort, as time permits,
I'll bring before you: if your eye can read
A line, that's your Prince in any face,
Examin it to th' full. Mean while, be pleas'd
To take a ſtrict Survey of all the Court,
The greateſt, and moſt flouriſhing, on Earth.

Syl. So every tongue reports it; a full Orb
Of matchleſs Glory, where your Emperor
Rules, like the *Sun*, and gives each noble, warmth.

Oth. Nothing appears, alas, as heretofore;
The darkneſs of his horrid vices, have
Eclips'd the glimmering rays of his frail virtue.
His cruelties, like birds of prey, have pick'd
All ſeeds of Nobleneſs from his falſe heart;
And now it lyes a ſad dull lump of earth,
Impatient of wiſe councel, and reproof.
To day he dooms, his Mother to be ſlain;
Swears, that ſhe plots againſt his Crown, and life:
Sentence is paſt, and the poor *Queen*'s betray'd.
See where ſhe comes.

Emperor, *Octavia*, *Britanicus*, *Seneca*, *Druſilla*, *Piſo*, *Plautus*; *Agrippina*, led by two Virgins all in white, a Dagger, and bowl of Poyſon carry'd before her: Courtiers, and Guards following. *Britanicus* kneels.

Cya. O, *Sylvius*, I am loſt! there, there he kneels;
My flames increaſe, my Soul new paſſions feels.
My flight from *Parthia* I'll no more regard;
All was too little, for ſo great reward.
Nero. To me?
Plau. Dread Sir, the Prince *Britanicus*.
Ne. Say you?
Plau. He kneels.
Ne. Sir, would you ought with me?
Brit. Not for my ſelf, but for the *Queen*, thus low
I fall, and beg you would ſome pitty ſhew.
Caſt from your breſt, this rank and Poyſ'nous hate:
Alas, how many do repent too late?
In acts of Love, KINGS are beſt underſtood:
Hell makes ſome great; 'tis GOD-like to be good.
It is your Mother——
Oh that that Sacred name ſhould not avert
Your wrath! nor, with its ſoftneſs, melt your heart!

Your Mother 'tis, whom you command to bleed:
What will the cens'ring World think of this deed?
Ne. Why, let it think: if *Aſſes* bray, muſt I
Regard? I ſay, again, that ſhe ſhall dye.
Why is ſhe not to Execution led?
She's plotting now. *Druſillus*, ſee her dead.
Sene. If, for the guilty, we to *Heav'n* may pray,
Can you the Innocent ——
Ne. Old fool, away.
Brit. Juſtice is robb'd, his ſword & ſcales you move;
Sweet Mercy ſtarts, and, ſtriking, flyes above,
Where, to the *Gods*, ſuch horrid tales of you
She does relate, as they can ſcarce think true:
Fate trembles, as ſhe writes in her book;
Ev'n *Jove*, with horror of this fact, is ſhook,
New points his Thunder, brandiſhes ith' Ayr
Dread Lightning, and, and with *Rome*, intends a War.
Ne. Let him begin; my purpoſe I'll maintain,
Though he ſhould ſcorching ſhowrs of *Sulphur* rain.
Though he ſtood near ——
And from ſome neighbouring Cloud, did hurl down fire,
With freſh recruits of men, his arm I'ld tire,
And ſhe, at laſt, ſhould, ſpight of him expire.
Would he were here, to end the grand debate:
But why, with you, do I catipulate?
My word's an *Oracle*, and ſtands her Fate.
Octa. Ah, *Cæſar*, if you can thus cruel prove
To her, and lay aſide all filial Love,
What muſt I then expect, who am your wife,
But that you, ſhortly too, ſhould take my life?
By all the pleaſures of our marriage bed ——
Ne. I ſwear, ſpeak one word more, and thou art dead.
Brit. Tyrant, this muſt not be, while I draw breath.
Ner. then thou dy'ſt too,
Brit. Lo, thus I brave my death.
Ne. Ha! does he ſmile?

By

By all the *Gods*, I'll quickly change your mirth:
With my own hand, I'll cut thee from the earth.
Oth. Dread *Sir* ——
Ne. Was ever ſuch an inſolence?
Brit. Sir, what I did was in my own defence.
When e're I riſe againſt Sacred head
In thought, may loads of Thunder ſtrike me dead.
You are my Maſter, and *Rome*'s Emperour;
May you live long, and make right uſe of pow'r.
Cya. Guard him, you *Gods*, and ſave his innocence.
Ne. So *Sir*: yet ſhe ſhall dye. Go, take her hence.
Octa. Oh, how my tender heart does *Sympathiſe*!
Grief ſtirkes me dumb, and pity fills my eyes.
Agr. Thou ſavage Monſter, ſeed of Rocks, more wild
More wild than the fierce Tygreſs, of her young beguil'd,
Barbarian! who in ſome dark cave wert bred,
Made drunk with poyſon, with corruption fed,
Offspring of Hell! But, oh, my lab'ring mind
Cannot get vent, nor fit expreſſions find,
Why was I made ſo ſtrong? Oh my accurſt!
Grief ſwells me up, and yet I cannot burſt.
Ne. Why would ſhe thus in torments here remain?
I pitty her: go put her out of pain.
Agr. Tyrant, wherein have I deſerv'd this baſe
And barbarous uſage? -- Oh my foul diſgrace!
Ha! ſhall I tell it to the World, or dye,
And in my *Urn*, let all in ſilence lye?
My Soul doth ſtruggle, with its load of woes;
Woes much more horrid than thoſe painful throws
My body felt, when firſt I brought to light
This curſed Son, now *Baſilisk*, to ſight.
Ne. Am I to be obey'd? how dare you ſtay?
Furies and Hell! be gone, take her away.
Agr. Oh ſtay a while, ere I loſe my breath
Hear my laſt words; more dreadful than my death.

Bear me ſome winged GOD, and fix me High
On ſome tall *Pyramid*, that hits the Sky;
Place all the World, on the vaſt rounds below,
And make my voice ſo loud, that all may know:
This Monſter, under *Tyrian* purple hid,
Did force a paſſage to his Mother's bed.
Where are thy dreadful bolts; (to *Jove* I call)
Strike Him, or me, amiſs they cannot fall.
Oh horrid fact to tell! it wounds my ear:
The Day and Night together mingled were.
Monſter of men, who altered nature's courſe,
The ſtream ran backwards, and found out the Source.

Nero. The Beldame raves; *Druſillus*, take her hence:
All this is forg'd; *Heav'n* knows my innocence.
A moments reſpite I will not afford,
But when ſhe's dead let *Otho* bring me word. { *Exe.* ſeverally *Nero* & *Agripp.*

Manent *Piſo*, *Plautus*, *Mirmilon.*

Piſo. Very well. Hark ye, Gentlemen, may we talk?

Plau. Treaſon? No.

Piſ. Then I'll hold my peace.

Mir. Faith, I know not, but there was a ſtranger here yeſterday hang'd, for looking ſuſpitiouſly.

Piſ. Very good; 'twas an excellent *memorandum*; therefore I'll ſhut my eyes, and not look at all, or hereafter always in company were a Masque:

Plau. Not ſo *Sir* if you tender your ſafety; ſuch reſervation argues thoughtfulneſs: now the Emperor can't endure a man that's given to meditation; hates a Philoſopher, as much as he loves a Fidler; *Seneca*, to my knowledge, is burthen to him; in my hearing, he call'd him crazy Caterpillar, and venerable Book-worm.

Mir. Right, *Plautus*. Therefore, *Piſo*, be not thoughtful; 'tis dangerous. A friend of mine (hearк ye) this morning, by the Emperor's Order, had his throat cut, for being thoughtful

Pi.

Pi. The good *Empreſs*—

Plau. How *Sir*?

Piſ. Well, the *Empreſs* then. Alas, how ſudden, from the top of Glory—

Mir. Alas? do you pity her then?

Piſ. I, *Sir*. Greatneſs and goodneſs are—

Plau. What, *Sir*?

Piſ. I know not, nor where, unleſs in the other world.

Mir. You weep, *Piſo*, have a care, a ſort of liquid Treaſon.

Piſo. 'Twas your hair hit my eye, and cauſed this Rheum: I'll to the Country again. Farewel, Gentlemen.

Long live the Emperor; that's no Treaſon.

Mir. No, *Sir* no: Adieu, good *Piſo*. He wears an honeſt heart. *Exeunt.*

Scene, the Court.

Nero, Otho, Seneca, Druſillus, &c. *Agrippina*, dead.

Oth. She is, as you would have her, (*Sir*) no more:
See where ſhe lyes, all ſtained with her own gore.
She ſaid, an antient man bid her beware
Of ever ſeeing you made Emperor;
For you, at laſt, would cauſe her to be ſlain:
Then let me dye, ſhe ſaid, ſo he may Reign.

Ne. How wiſely, then did I her death Decree!
For 'twould have been a great impiety
To let her live, and mar the *Prophecy*.

Oth. Choice of two deaths, by your command, we gave;
But She cry'd, both; a double death I'le have:
One poys'nous drop, for *Heav'n*, I would not ſell;
Each drop will ſink his Soul more deep in Hell.

In

In her right hand, the Dagger she did hold;
And with her left, she heav'd the Fatal gold,
And drunk the venom off: that being done,
Deep, in her breſt, the keen Stilletto run:
With many wounds she made her boſom gay;
Her wounds like *flood-gates*, did themſelves diſplay;
Through which, life ran, in *ſcarlet* ſtreams away.

Ne. Remove her hence. My Soul now free does walk,
And ſhall no more be clogg'd with moral talk.
My Statue ſhall be made of laſting ſteel:
Before it, Lords of *Rome* ſhall humbly kneel.
Great *Julius* and *Auguſtus* you adore;
And why not *me* who have their very pow'r?
To them you daily offer Sacrifice:
I am a GOD; my ſelf I Canonize.

Sen. Mongſt *Gods* their Glory ſhines now they are gone.
Becauſe, with us, like Stars their virtues ſhone.

Ne. Virtue's a name; Religion is a thing
Fitter to ſcare poor *Prieſts*, than daunt a KING.
Swift, as quick thought, through every art I range:
Who but a GOD, like me, could Sexes change?
Sporus be witneſs of my Mighty art;
Sporus, now *Lady*, once *Lord* of my heart.
At my command, the fragrant Winds do blow;
The willing floods in waves of balſom flow:
This hand does all the ſweets of nature ſow.
I rankſack Nature; all its treaſures view;
Beings annihilate, and make a new:
All this can I, your *God*-like *Nero*, do.

Sen. What Fiend is this which, in his breſt, unſpy'd,
Bears up his Soul on ſuch large wings of pride?
Let me not dye for ſpeaking what is true:
All this you would, but (alas!) canot do.

Ne. Ha!

Sen.

Sen. If you do well and noble acts Atchieve,
When e're you dye, all honeſt hearts will grieve;
Each *Roman* will, to after Ages tell
How good, how great, how excellent you fell;
VVhat pitty 'twas that you ſhould dye ſo young!
Thus ſhall your honour ſound from every tongue:
But, though your Fame ſurvive, your body muſt
Rot, and be crumbled into common duſt.
Each grain of which, becauſe you once did Reign,
Will not turn gold, nor any luſtre gain:
Yours, and the Beggars duſt alike muſt paſs
Inſtead of ſand, to fill Times hour-glaſs.

Ne. Gown-man, thou ly'ſt.—
The VVorld's eternal, and its *Monarch*, I:
Then how is't poſſible for me to dye,
Yet give me creature immortality?
If, when I leave this world, men ſhould debate
The manner; Say, I did my ſelf tranſlate.
The glory of my *God-head* I will ſhrowd
Not in a Mantle, but in a perfum'd Cloud:
In ſmoak of Incenſe I will mount above,
And, in his Throne, take the right hand of *Jove*.

Sen. O murd'ring pride, thou doſt all reaſon kill!
You will have Altars too?

Nero. Yes, Slave, I will;
Altars of Gold, in Chryſtal Temples built:
No blood of Bulls, nor Goats, ſhall there be ſpilt;
Such courſe rank ſmoak may ſooty *VULCAN* pleaſe,
Pluto, or horned *Pan*; dull Deityes!
The beſt of humane gore ſhall waſh my Shrine;
Neroes ſhall bleed, and they are half Divine.
In caſes made of Diamond entire,
Stars ſhall inſtead of Lamps, lend their bright fire.
Each common *God* ſhall, in his turn, be *Prieſt*,
And for your lower world make his requeſt:

Then offer up a grateful Sacrifice,
Kings heads, *Queens* hearts, and charming Virgins eyes.

Enter Petronius.

Sen. O *Heav'n*! his blasphemies no limit have;
His bruitish impudence our *Gods* does brave:
Without controll he does their pow'r defy,
And I, like midnight hush'd, stand trembling by.
I'le speak, although he blast me with his breath;
Repentance too may win him for my death.
Dread *Sir*, if you would please——

Ne. Fond preacher, hence;
Gods! can I still endure his insolence?
Guards, seize him; go, let him in prison howl,
And solace there his melancholly soul.

[*Ex. Oth. Sen.* & *Guards.*

But, dear *Petronius*, how shall I requite
Thee, who sole author art of my delight?
When my heart sickens, still thou bring'st me ease,
And dost my fancy, with new Objects, please.

Pet. To sooth your soul, ruff'l'd with this late storm,
My care found out so sweet, so rare a form,
So full of blooming graces, in each part,
As well deserves the conquest of your heart.
Not purple Violets, ith' early spring,
Such graceful sweet such tender beauties bring.
The Orient blush which does her cheeks adorn
Makes Coral pale, vies with the Rosy morn.
Not *Venus*, sprung from the Seas snowy foam,
Neptunes bright Seed, her whiteness can or'e come.
Cupid has took a surfeit from her eyes;
When e're she smiles, in Lambent fire he fries:
And when she weeps, in pearls dissolved he dyes.

Ne. Hold, hold; I am o'recharged with this excess:
Thy deeds are great; but make thy boasting less.
What is her name? and where does she lye hid?

Pet. She's the partner of Lord *Otho's* bed;

Poppea

Poppea nam'd: with gold I brib'd her maid,
For which the eaſie ſlave her truſt betray'd.
Not far from *Rome* this Beauty does reſide;
Chaſte ſhe is thought, becauſe yet never try'd.
Her quick black eye does wander with deſire,
And, if I judge aright, bears wanton fire.
Oft as *Syllana* told me, when to Court
Her Lord was gone, eager of unknown ſport,
She'd ſigh, and in her bolom hide her face,
And with fierce action would the wench embrace.
Dreſs'd like *DIANA*, ſhe in Woods is fear'd,
And gives ſwift chaſe to all the Savage herd:
With vigour maſculine ſhe rides along,
Her Quiver, full of ſhafts, behind her hung;
Her right hand holds a Dart, her left a Bow;
Her long black locks, on her fair ſhoulders flow,
As thick'ning clouds o're the *Sun's* brightneſs grow.

Ne. Thou dear procurer of my moſt loved joyes,
Fly, fly; the leaſt delay my life deſtroyes.
Now try thy skill; this is indeed a task:
Win her, and thou haſt more than thou canſt ask.

Exit Petronius.

Let phlegmatick dull KINGS, call Crowns their care:
Mine is my wanton; and does Beauties ſhare
Above my Miſtreſs Eyes. On, *Nero*, on;
Spend thy vaſt ſtock, and riot in thy Throne.
If there be pleaſure yet I have not found,
Name it, ſome GOD: 'Tis mine, though under ground:
No nook of Hell ſhall hide it from my ſight,
But I will conjure't into open light.
My Scepter, like a charming rod, ſhall raiſe
Such ſports, as would old *Epicures* amaze:
Pleaſures ſo rich, ſo various, and ſo new,
As never yet the *Gods*, my great fore-fathers, knew.

Exit.

Finis Actus primi.

Actus II. *Scena* I.

Druſillus and a Roman.

Druſil. BArb'rous and horrid! O, the raging Fiend,
When will his black impieties have end?
The great, the wiſe, the worthy *Seneca*
Is, by this Bloody Monſter made away.
Poor City! whither are thy Founders fled,
To what low diſtance Regions of the dead,
That at their Country's call they will not riſe,
And this ungovern'd Tyrants rage chaſtiſe?

Ro. I ſaw the beſt and wiſeſt of mankind,
The Pilot of the will, the guide oth' mind,
Dying and pale; from every gen'rous vein
Baſe Executioners his life did drain;
By *Nero* kill'd, by *Nero* whom he lov'd;
Whoſe youth by painful ſtudies he improv'd,
And warm'd ſo long the viper in her breſt
That the kind Hoſt was poyson'd by the gueſt.

Dru. In vain we mourn: ſome noble *Roman* ſhould
Dare to be glorious, dangerouſly good,
And kill this Tyrant; kill him gorg'd with wine,
Forcing a day, and making black night ſhine,
Debauch'd, and ſordidly ambitious grown,
Midſt all his Revels, would the deed were done.

Ro. Guilt, the mind's wild-fire, lick his Spirits up;
Preſs him good GODS, preſs him, until he droop,
Sink, and be damn'd, beneath the loweſt Hell:
After his death we may in ſafety dwell.

Dru. But, while he lives, no honeſt *Roman* may
Paſs night in reſt, or view one peaceful day.

Exeunt.

Scena

Scœ. II. The Country.

Otho, Poppea, Petronius, Piſo.

Petr. WHy ſhould ſuch *God*-like forms inhabit here,
And bleſs th' ignoble ſort?

Otho Pr'ythee, no more:
She ſha' not go to Court; ther's diſcord in't.

Pet. Now by your Lady's lovely eyes I ſwear,
That Country ſounds not half ſo well to me.
Is it more harmony to hear a Clown
Whiſtle his dull Tunes, which you conſtrue ſolemn,
Than ſee a Lady ſoftly touch her Lute,
And breath an Ayr to the melodious ſtrings?
Her beauty and her voice ſo raviſhing,
That each Spectators Soul is left in doubt
Where firſt to mount, into the eye or ear.
The Court!
Now, by my Honor, dearer than my life;
And, as I action love, I think the Court
May well be tearmed the Noble Rendeſvous
Of Gallant Spirits: 'tis a Circle, *Sir*,

Oth. More I'le allow, it is a golden Circle;
But, like the *Carthaginian Hero's* KING,
It carries poyſon: 'tis a fatal Circle;
Upon whoſe Magick skirts, a thouſand Devils,
In Chryſtal forms, ſit tempting innocence,
And becken early Virtue from its Center.

Piſo. Now, by my life, I think you councel ill.
I view thee, and oth' ſudden, ſomthing calls
Thee *Trayter.*
Brother, I never lov'd this man; that's all. *Exit:*

Ot. Why ſhould you loſe me on a bare ſuſpicion?
The *Gods* ram curſes on me, thick as Hail,
If e're I harbour'd, in this breſt, a thought
But what was Noble, of your ſpotly loves.
I muſt be bold to ſay, yo've done me wrong; And

And, but I have by Oath inviolable
Sworn you a friendſhip firm as Deſtiny,
Protecting you and yours, I ſhould not thus
Tamely put up your angry Brother's terms.
Oth. Your pardon, generous friend, he was too blame;
Let my repentance ſet all right again:
Indeed I am aſham'd for what was paſt.
Pet. See, our contention has diſturb'd your Lady,
And call'd the precious dew into her eyes.
Oth. No more, my dear; nay, if thou lov'ſt me, ceaſe.
Pet. I wonder that the Emperor's ſo long!
I wrote to have him call *Otho* to Court,
Imploy him there, and come in perſon hither. *Exeunt.*

Scæn. 3. The Court.

Octavia, Britannicus.

Oct. AH, deareſt Brother, be not too ſecure;
Syrens moſt dreadful are, when they allure:
I dread him moſt, ſince your laſt Noble ſtrife,
And fear he is plotting 'gainſt your precious life,
Of which you ought to have a tender care,
Becauſe your Siſter claims ſo deep a ſhare;
For, hear me, *Gods*, the doom which you decree
This gallant *Prince*, ſhall prove my Deſtiny.
Brit. Fear not my life; he cannot be ſo baſe.
I have ſome friends, that all his miſchiefs trace:
If ought againſt me move, their care will find.
Some means to let me know what is deſign'd.
Oct. HEAV'N ever ſhield you from his violence:
His kindneſs, to you, is but meer pretence,
And if he ſmiles, 'tis at your innocence.
The Chryſtal of his eye is clouded 'ore
That his dark thoughts my *Genius* can't explore.
E're while I met him,

The

The Fates ſit working on his gather'd brows;
Slow ſteps he takes, and murmurs as he goes,
Starts, and fixt looks upon the *Terra's* throws.

Brit. Mild as calm Martyrs, I could death receive;
Two reaſons, only, make me wiſh to live:
Two debts remain to pay, moſt Nobly due:
Love claims the firſt, t'other I owe to you.

Oct. Within your breaſt does Love chief Regent ſtand?
I thought that reaſon there had ſole command.

Brit. Never was heart ſo pittifully kind,
So capable of Love's impreſſion made;
We me, all Beauties gentle uſage find:
The humble, charm; the mighty do invade.
Laſt Year, unknown to *Parthia* I did go,
And view'd the Court; beheld the gallant foe
Of *ROME*, Prince of *Alamander*, whoſe great Name
Sound loud, and almoſt cracks the cheeks of Fame.
Bellona then, as *Goddeſs* of out Arms,
I did Adore; but ſoon felt ſofter charms:
The curious Prince within my looks did find
Something that wrought upon his Noble mind,
Diſcours'd me, call'd me friend, and did confeſs
He never lov'd a man to ſuch exceſs.
One day, (Oh day moſt fatal to my reſt!)
After a thouſand kindneſſes expreſt,
He took me by the hand, and gently ſaid,
Dear friend, there is a young and noble Maid
That fain would ſee you. Bowing, I reply'd,
Sir, I am yours, and to your ſervice ty'd.

Oct. Your ſtory yet has no great cauſe to fright.

Brit. At length, we came; but ſuch a Glorious ſight,
Such a bright flux of rayes on tender ſenſe,
Such charming ſoftneſs, ſuch ſweet excellence,
Word may deſcribe, but never can define!
The Sun ne'r ſaw an object ſo Divine!
Fancy can't reach it! above fiction fair!
All the ſweet lines of Beauty center'd there.

Unlike

Unlike to *Cæsar's* was my amorous Doom;
I came, I saw, but was my self o'recome.
It was his Sister,
Cyara nam'd, that Royal charming Maid;
My soul was rapt with joy, though shook with dread:
So *Angels*, when they stoop to mortal sight,
Strike us with awe, yet ravish with delight.

Oth. Why did you not your noble Love declare?

I did; but first committed to her ear
The secret of my birth, which she receiv'd
With modest joy, and generously believ'd.
Our Loves too happy were to flourish long,
Frost-nipt i'th' bud, they wither'd as they hung.
Some *Roman* slave, I know not whom nor where,
Gave the old KING private intelligence;
But the young Prince most watchful, sent me word,
Hasten'd my flight, and would not time afford
To hear my thanks: ungrateful so I came
To *ROME*, but nourish'd still my former flame.

Enter *Cyara*, and *Silvius*, at one door; the Emperour and *Plautus* at another.

Cya. YOnder he stands, the GOD's great Master-piece!
Oh, I could ever on that Object gaze,
And lose my Senses in that goodly maze!
With gay and vig'rous youth his eyes are Crown'd,
Presence, and Manly graces, all around
His Noble form, do make their bright abode,
Like beams of Lustre circling in a GOD.

Nero. He dyes, that bold Controller of my will;
He has Oblig'd me so, that I must kill.
Why, with dull thoughts, do I my fancy pall?
When I look sad, whole *Hecatombs* should fall.
Ha! who are they? my fretting blood does rise:
Hands, rest; I'le try to blast him, with my eyes.

Make

Make me *Basilisk*, but one short hour,
Some GOD, that would be *Nero's* Emperour.

Plau. Oh you just Pow'rs! where is *Astrea* fled?
Foul vice Triumphs, trampling on Virtues head.
Here Fam'd *Democritus* his teeth might show,
And *Heraclitus* might his tears bestow.

Nero. I hate him deadly,
As poverty, diseases, or old age;
For his wish'd death, my *Empire* I'le engage,
Not Hell, nor *Heav'n* my fierce resolves shall daunt:
First, I will Act; then I'le think upon't.
Octavia, follow me.

Exit Ambo.

Brit. What does he mean?
He frowns on me, and smiles upon the *Queen*.
These ruddy drops some say ill *Omens* are:
Gods, be my guard; but 'tis not worth my care.
I bleed within; there, there's the mortal wound,
For which no cure no Balsom can be found.
In dreams, *Cyara*, I behold thy charms,
With fix'd imagination of high pleasure,
Thy beauteous form shall flow into my arms
And I embrace it as a real Treasure.

Exit.

Cya. How dull this place appears, now he is gone!
Night's Emblem, it bemoans the absent SUN.

Sylvia. Madam, 'tis fit you should discover now;
Put off the cloud, and fair *Cyara* show.

Cya. E're I reveal my self, his love I'le try.

Syl. You doubt him.

Cya. No it is curiosity.

Exeunt.

Nero, Octovia.

Ne. Your Sentence dooms me to be curst, or blest;
Can you deny me? 'tis my first request:

All things are easie to a willing mind;
'Tis quickly done, if you will prove but kind.

Oct. My soul doth with convulsive horror shake;
Name it again, for sure I did mistake.

Ne. That you, the Prince, your Brother's blood would spill;
No matter how, so you but swear to kill.
Here with my Dagger, let the deed be done:
You often find him sleeping, and alone.

Oct. Sleeping! Oh *Gods*, can You your vengeance keep?
Where is your Thunder? No, 'tis you that sleep:
Sure else, your Justice would his vice confound,
And drive this Monster quick into the ground.
Hell to his soul such impudence has giv'n,
That, he in time, will storm your fort of *Heav'n*:
In blasphemies his spirits do exhale;
Your high bright walls his Gyant crimes will scale.
Oh, my heart's full.

(*Stabs her.*)

Ne. Here's that will give it vent.
So, now go tell the *Gods* my black intent.
Britannicus his death I will defer;
'Tis pretty well I've made an end of her.
Now I will haste to meet *Poppea's* arms.
Oh, Love, assist me with thy mighty charms,
And I will raise thy wanton *Altars* high'r;
Old men, and Eunuchs, shall in heaps expire,
Because uncapable of thy soft fire.
This day my fatal brow no clouds shall wear;
Till I return, *Rome* lay aside thy fear:
I, and the *Gods* of VVit, smile once a year.

Exit.

Oct. O my *Britannicus*, my Brother! --- Oh,
Might I but see thee once yet, ere I go,
And wander in the wide dark dens of death:
But, Oh! my Soul is almost out of breath.

Enter

Enter Britannicus.

Brit. He ſent me here; for what, I can't deviſe.
Oct. Ah me, look here, with pitty glut thy eyes.
Now I am well: for thy ſake I would live.
My dear, my gentle Brother, do not grieve.
Brit. Gods! Gods! but they are deaf, or will not hear.
No hopes of Life? Oh my prophetick fear!
Sigh heart, weep eyes; I draw each Chryſtal ſpring:
But 'tis my blood muſt be thy offering.
Oct. Hold, hold; *Cyara* 'tis *Cyara*'s call:
My ſhare I give to her ſhe claims you all.
Give me your Sword: So now I've loſt my fears:
You weep too much, and yet I love thoſe tears.
It was a gen'rous proffer, 'twas indeed:
Upon thy boſom let me reſt my head;
'Tis a ſoft pillow ſweetly now I reſt,
And ſigh my Soul into thy gentle breſt. (*Dyes.*)
Brit. Oh ſtay, my dear, my moſt lov'd Siſter, ſtay;
But one word more. Her ſoul is on its way:
She's gone, ſhe's gone; thou flowry ſweet farewell.
Oh where, to whom ſhall I my ſorrows tell!
In every grove and melancholly bow'r
Thy ſad untimely loſs I will deplore;
Thy name's dear Character each Tree ſhall bear;
On every letter I will drop a tear.
How quickly fate our faireſt hopes beguiles!
Oh, thou ſhort ſolace of my many ills,
Adieu! *Adieu* my Star, my deareſt Light!
Now thou art gone, I am all dark, all night:
One lump I grow, and know not how I move;
All ſad, and gloomy, as the eyes of Love.
Truſt me, thy ſweetneſs I ſhall ne're forget;
Stiff, with my ſorrows, on thy Tomb I le ſit,
Till I, at laſt, into cold Marble turn,
And, with my Pious figure, grace thy *Urn*. *Exit.*

Finis Actus II.

Actus III. Scena I.

Britannicus with a Boy.

Brit. WHat is this Earth to me? why do I ſtay,
Since thou, my Joy, my dear *Octavia*,
Art raviſh'd hence? To *Parthia* I will,
And in thy preſence, fair *Cyara*, dye:
My only comforts on thy truth depend;
If thou art chang'd, my grief ſhall have an end.
Go Sing the Song without.

Song.

WEep, weep, you Muſes, drain the Springs,
Such Notes go warble to the ſtrings,
Such Dirges as the Ravens ſound
When Ghoſts run trembling through the ground:
The faireſt of her Sex is dead,
Her tender limbs are wrap'd in lead;
Her eyes, ſtars envy, the Earth' pride,
The broad black hand of Death does hide;
In Death's dark chamber, now ſhe lyes,
Pale as the Snow, and cold as Ice.

Chorus.

The grave, the lovly grave will bring us eaſe,
There we ſhall ſweetly ſleep in downy peace;

There no diſtractions, nor jealouſies ce,
But all from inord'nate paſſions are free:
The cold Tomb is free from hot love and deſire;
It has aſhes good ſtore, but admits of no fire:
There men do never groan, nor women cry,
But all things, huſh'd, in ſolemn ſilence lie:

Bri. Enough, enough. Oh, my ſick heart, not yet!
Break, break, for ſhame, let Nature have her debt.

Cyara, Sylvius.

Cya. Withdraw good *Sylvius*. How ſad he looks!
Was ever man ſo goodly? Oh my heart,
Bear up! and yet I dare not ſpeak to him.
If there be any charms in womens tongues,
If there be any words that can infuſe
Soft love into a boſom, and create
A gentle paſſion, good *Heav'n* grant it me.
Sir, may I interrupt, without offence,
Your ſerious thoughts? I've ſomething to relate
Which is your near concern.

Brit. Mine, pretty *Sir*?
Say on, I hear you. What ſhould his buſineſs be?

Cya. 'Tis from a Lady, who made me her Agent,
A ſorry one, I fear, and much unable
To tell what ſhe commanded me; a ſtory
So lamentable, that I cannot think on't,
But ſtraight my eyes o'reflow with tears: pardon me,
Only a little reſpite, I'le go on.

Brit. Thou raiſeſt ſomthing in me, which as yet
I cannot give a name to. What can this mean?

Cya. *CYARA*, SIR, the *Parthian* Princeſs.

Brit. Ha!
Com'ſt thou from her? a thouſand bleſſings on thee.

Cya.

Cya. A thouſand curſes, rather, for my news.
My name's *Coralbo*, her unhappy kinſman,
To my poor faith ſhe did the mighty honour
Of telling the ſad ſtories of your Loves.
It was her chance, a diſmall chance indeed,
That nay you fled, as ſhe was ſitting at
The Palace window, ſtriking of her Lute,
Thoughtful, and Virgin-like, alone, to caſt
Her eye upon your perſon; ſtrait ſhe bluſh'd,
Wondring to ſee you in that equipage;
But ſoon her Brother did unriddle all:
Amazement ſeiz'd her firſt; but when the Prince
Was gone, ſhe loos'd the rains, grief had full ſtopt:
She trembled, fetch'd heart-breaking ſighs,
As if her eyes were ſprings; ſhe made complaints
So languiſhing, and with ſo ſad an accent,
I wonder that it kill'd her not till now.

Brit I hope you come not to abuſe me.
By *Heav'n*, if you do ——

Cya. Indeed I do not:
Let that convince you, if you know her hand.
I find he's Noble, his looks are chang'd oth' ſudden;
I fear I've gone too far. How do you, *Sir*?

Brit. Well, Boy. O GODS! Devils! Hell, *Heaven* and Earth!

Reads. If in the other world, I can behold ought here, it will be you, pray love my memory: 'twill be a ſatisfaction above the thoughts of *Paradiſe*, to your dying *Cyara*.
I feel a mortal trembling ſhot a long
My *Arteries*! I'm cold! *Octavia*! *Cyara*! Oh!

(*Falls*)

Cya. Help, help; my Lord, *Cyara* lives; return.
What have I done? upon thy dying lips
I'le print my ſoul, but I'le bring back thy life.
Fool that I was, for a fancy, thus
To play away that Pearl, for which I would

Have

Have ſold my breath, my vital Spirits, my all.
O, he returns. *Cyara* is not dead:
Look up, my Lord; do you not know this face?
Brit. *Cyara*! *Heav'ns*, 'tis ſhe! Thou charming fair,
How am I raviſh'd with thy Glorious preſence!
O, who would live on Earth, ſultry and hot,
Under a load of care, did he once taſte
The pleaſures of theſe cool immortal ſhades?
O the refreſhing ſweets which the winds blow
From ever-budding flowers eternal Spring!
Cya. Where, *Sir*?
Brit. Why, here, in bleſt *Elizium*.
Cya. O he is loſt, diſtracted!
Brit. Look, look, my dear, pr'y thee let's walk along,
The graſs does ſhine with more Emerald green,
Each purling brook like liquid plate appears,
And every pebble ſeems a *Diamond*;
Fall burniſh'd trees with fruit of maſſy Gold!
Upon whoſe boughs, all fair and *Heav'nly* forms
Sit ſweetly warbling to their Loves below.
See yonder's *Octavia*, my Siſter, look,
Pale and forlorn, in a cloſe gloomy,
Her *Ayry* ſubſtance thus I will condenſe
And to ſqueeze water, 'cauſe I cannot weep.
Cya. Ah *Prince*, *Cyara* lives, and I am ſhe.
Brit. Thou art a lying Boy: O *Gods*, my head!
Cya. Do you not know me, *Sir*? Look wiſtly on me.
Brit. *Cyara*'s Picture! juſt ſuch charming eyes!
Such ſnowy hands, ſuch lips, ſuch winning ſmiles!
Such tenderneſs! ſuch was her every Grace!
But Oh! you told a falſe, a fatal tale,
The accent of thy voice is different:
She could not lye, for ſhe was all perfection:
All beauty ſickned when ſhe left the world.
Cyara, Oh thou fair one! Glorious Saint,
Thou could'ſt not dye for me, deſertleſs me.

Cya.

Cya. She is not dead, but lives, and lives you, *Sir.*
Brit. Thou dost associate with Lawyers sure,
And Travellers.
Cya. Who I, *Sir*? why?
Brit. Because
Thou lyest extreamly, Boy: No, she is dead;
The canopy of *Heav'n* is hung with Sable;
The *Sun*, like a great mourner, drives her Hearse,
Wrap'd round with clouds; each Star withdraws
His Golden head, and burns within his socket
The whole cope is dark, black, dismal,
And mourns the sudden loss of fair *Cyara.*
Ha! though; yonder flyes a night-Raven
In each black eye there rowls a pound of Jet.
See how he fans, with his huge wicker wings
The dusky *Ayr.* Come, boy, be gone
I'le save thee, though I dye me self: go in:
Run, run, I say, I'le fetch my Bow and shoot him.

Exeunt.

Scæn. The Country.

Petronius, *Poppea.* *Piso*, over-hearing.

Pop. I must not hear you, *Sir.*
Petr. Can you despise
A flame, whose matchless splendor drowns the Stars,
And lustre vies with the great eye of Day?
O, scrupulous Virtue, art thou grown so cold
That the reflected beams of doubled Honours,
Beating upon thee with incessant Glories,
Cannot approach thee, through thy walls of Ice?
With all their fiery points, cannot once pierce thee?
Pop. High minds should not be tempted with appearance,
Nor drown to dangerous courses from homely Cells,
Where honest pleasure with safe plenty dwells.

Petr.

Pet. But what converse, what Nobleness is here
To deck your thoughts, that claim a vaster Sphere;
Through all the *Heav'n* they should, like Eagles, roam,
Not stay in such a solitary home.

Pop. What unkown guests are these that tear my breast?
Like slaves, in golden mines, they dig their way:
A Crown they shew, which my frail heart Adores;
Before my thoughts, a Royal Scepter flyes,
At which, my fancy grasps; but when it comes
And it bright glories offer to my hand,
I fain would reach, and yet refuse to hold.

Petr. Madam, consider 'tis a mighty proffer;
'Tis not this Province, or that Colony;
He gives you all: all is a gift so great,
As none but *Jove* to *Cæsar* can bestow.
What is it deters you from your happiness?

Pop. Oh, I am lost in Honours *Labyrynth*,
No clew to guide me, but my own desire,
And that would lead me out, but knows not how.

Piso. Oh *Heaven*, what will this earth come to! Was it for this my noble Brother was sent for in so much haste? and is it for this, he harbours that Viper in our house, to tear his Darling hence, and eat his heart out? O Laws of hospitality, why are you Sacred? why is my hand so backward to punish that ravisher of our Honour?

Methinks I see that *Genius* of our house
Start from his Monument, and stalk along
Shaking with Panick fears, and with an eye
That Darts its poyson'd beams of Indignation
At me: me thinks I see him chide my slow
Revenge.

Pop. My brother has lost his Senses.

Piso. I would I had, and with thm lost my life,
So thou could'st find thy honour: Oh thy Honour!
More worth, than all that golden *Pageantry*,
High tops of Fortune, Glorious *Pinacles*,

And *Heav'n* knows what, that swim in thy fond fancy;
Those wanton Sepulchers have swallowed it;
Thy eyes, those graves of Noblenes and Glory
I've known the time, when, had I look'd but thus,
Thus curiously upon thee, straight a blush
Would mount in to thy cheek; there's nothing now
But pale dishonour. Prithee do not speak,
Thy words are pestilent, the blasting issue
Of a corrupted heart, diseas'd, and deadly.

Pop. How should he know this? sure he over heard
Petronius talking with me: it must be so.
But pray why is't a sin to go to Court?
I am not guilty of one wicked thought,
And yet you make me a most wretched creature.

Piso. Indeed thou art a sinful wretched creature;
Thou art the wretched'st thing I ever saw;
Thy blood is all o' fire; the Emperour,
That *Dog-Star* has inflam'd it; I pity thee.
O that my tears could make thy heart relent,
Or quench those fires that will devour thee;
Then I would drain those Chrystal Sources dry;
Rivers I'de weep, and long luxuriant streams,
My eyes should play the Wantons, not thy way.
If thou hast any sense of shame, look back;
Thy feet upon the brink of ruin stand;
But one step more, and thou art lost for ever:
Glorious destruction, glitt'ring miseries,
Will keep thee waking till death close thy eyes.

[*Weeps.*

Petr. Fie, fie, my Lord; were your surmises true,
This is too much: it shows unmanly.

Piso. Ha!
It will not be: rather than suffer this,
Let me be ever branded, base, and barbarous.
My rage is kindled, and I'le bear no more.
Begone, thou Monster, fly, thou Harpy, fly;

Put

Put on thy wings of horror, and be gone,
Or, by my Honour, were this house a Temple,
Thy base black blood should stain the sacred floor.

Ex. Petro. and *Poppea* smiling on him.

Peso. I am troubled; yet there is one way left:
Revenge, revenge! O thou art sweet and lovely!
I'le go to *ROME*, and with wrong'd *Otho* joyn.

[*Trumpet sounds.*]

What means this noise?

Servants running over the Stage. {*Within. The Emperour, the Emperour!*

Plan. The Emperour, my Lord, is come in person hither.

Piso. Ha! is it so? then all fond hopes farewel:
Diseases be his welcome. O, I am mad.
This night he whore's my Sister. Hell, hear my pray'r!
Despair, Revenge, and Murther, come along:
Bring you all your cursed crew and come along:
In fatal business I'le employ you all,
With this sole arm *Heav'ns* vengeance I'le forestall:
An act so great, pale *Brutus* shall desire
To see *Cato* and *Cassius*, shall admire.
Start not, my Soul, but do't; *Poppea* dyes,
My anger's *Victim*, Honour's Sacrifice.
Her Beauties, so ador'd, so much admir'd,
With pride and sensual pleasure so inspir'd,
Shall in a moment sicken, fade, and fall;
Like the *North-wind*, I'le rush, and blast you all.
Nero, prepare; for, when so're I come,
Immortal as thou art, I bring thy doom.
I'le make that Cedar tremble like a reed:
Nero shall dye; that vaunting *God* shall bleed. *Exit.*

The Scene changes. After a Song, the Emperour *comes in Royally attended, bowing to* Poppea *&c.* Petronius.

Nero. Model of *Heav'n* thou Ornament of Earth,
Propitious Star that smiles on humane birth!

Or art thou *Goddess* of the silver floods?
Or the fair *Heav'nly* Huntress of these woods?
Or art thou *Venus*? *Venus* wants such fire,
When by the Graces, drest in bright attire,
She hasts to meet her Noble warrior's Arms:
Venus, in height of dalliance, wants such Charms.
Such beauty never was by *Paris* seen;
Such conqu'ring Ayr, and such Majestick meen.
O, Most Divine! with pity bless my flame.

Pop. Be not deluded, *Sir*; I mortal am.

Ne. If thou of mortal seed art born, be mine,
And I will make thee
More happy, than those pow'rs we call Divine.
To please thy sense, and ravish thy soft pow'rs,
I'le make such *Grotto's* springs, and Royal Bowr's,
As shall transcend the blest *Elizian* shade,
Tempe's fair grave and *Ida's* flow'ry head,
Where the *Gods* meet, and Dance in Masquerade.
For Baths, we will *Hydaspes* current have,
Lie close incircl'd in a Golden wave:
Thou *Queen* Triumphant; I thy humble slave.
Loe, at thy feet, *Nero* himself does lie,
He that commands the Earth, the Sea, the Skie,
For love of thee, does languish, sigh, and die.

Pop. Is all this true? can you do all these things?
Good *Heav'n* what happy creatures are you KINGS!

Nero. If thy heart bears such softness as thy brest,
Then I am happy, then I'm truly blest.
All my dear Joys are treasur'd in those eyes,
Those kinder Stars, those *Suns* of *Paradise*.
Without thy smiles, alas, I nothing am,
But the poor shaddow of a mighty name.

Pop. How my soul's rack'd, with joy and anxious fear!
Fain I would go, and yet would tarry here.
Whence do these new desires and wishes come?
Fain I would see I know not what, nor whom.

How

How rarely this KING talks! how far above
My Lord's grave rules of duty and of love!
Nero. About thy knees, O, let me ever grow.
Pop. Why do you weep?
Oero. My eyes ſhall ever flow:
Or, if theſe tender ſources ſhould decay,
My thawing ſoul ſhall melt it ſelf away.
O ſtay: I'le follow thus, if you remove,
And hold thee faſt with all the force of love.
Pop. Why is my heart in its reſolves, ſo ſlow?
Like a fond child, when two gay things you ſhow,
With wondring eyes it looks, does leap, and quake
For both; yet, doubtful, neither can partake.
Heav'ns! how he pants! how his lips warm my hand!
Nero They draw their heat from this warm firebrand.
Petr. She yields, ſhe yields! her looks her thoughts betray!
Greatneſs is entred, and her ſoul gives way.
Follow her ſtill, and let her take no reſt:
She thinks it pleaſure to be ſo oppreſt.
Pop. What muſt the price of all theſe pleaſures be?
Nature's choice offring, Art's variety
Of noiſy ſhows, and mighty Gallantry!
Nero. The price of all, is but thy gentle love.
Secure, in *Heav'n*, as *Juno* keeps her *Jove*,
Thou ſhalt keep me, fetter'd in golden chains;
The ſoft ſad ſtory of my pleaſing pains,
In ſighs upon thy boſom I'le relate;
Thy Beauty's creature, thou my Glories fate.
Drawn in a Chair of Gold, emboſs'd all o're
With their great Images whom we adore,
On velvet floors Triumphant thou ſhalt ride,
Princes ſhall run like pages, by thy ſide:
The *Sun* ſhall, from his flaming ſeat, look down,
And of the Thund'rer, ask a brighter *Throne*,
While all the *Gods* do bluſh
To ſee their art, by mortal wit out-done.

Pop.

Pop. And will you do all this for love of me?
Are there such charms in my society?
Nero But one short night let me your love enjoy,
And I, next mornig, will my life destroy.
Pop. Indeed you shall not; that were too severe.
Nay, if you love me, pray live all the year.
For fancy, I substantial pleasure reap
Is that all? 'Tis very cheap.
Tell me not what my duty does require;
Love mans me now, and shows his sacred fire:
To Crowns, those mighty objects I aspire.
If you dare do, as you have said, lead on:
Pale piety, *Adieu*; live here alone,
While I go taste the pleasues of a *Throne.*
Nero. Our Chariots haste: yet stay, I will not go.
Thou abstract of all sweets, thou melter, Oh
Gods! 'tis too much Joy has my Soul distrest,
Weary'd with raptures, take it to thy breast,
On those soft Globes of beauty let it rest.
Kind *God* of Love, O bring thy mother's Doves,
And waft us through the calm Celestial groves,
Surfeiting on each other's breast wee'l stray;
When we want words, and know not what to say,
With eyes thus languishing wee'll look all day:
Now sigh, now smile, or thus infolded lie,
And all along the Milky way wee'll die.

Exeunt.

Finis Actus Tertij.

Act. IV. Scæ. I.

Nero, Poppea, ſitting in State.

Nero. LEt not my Crown and ſelf thy wiſh confine:
Ask what thou wilt; by all the *Gods*, 'tis thine.
Be ſtudied in't, and I le applaud thee for't:
Mean while, behold the pleaſures of our Court.

[*Dance &c.*

Enter Britannicus, Mad: and *Cyara.*

Pop. O, my dread Lord, for theſe let me implore.
Nero. Live, wretches, and this Excellence adore.
Brit. Stay me not? by the *Gods*, I'le break your hold.
So ſad a ſtory, *Orpheus* never told,
When his harmonious ſighs pierc'd *Pluto's* gate;
But I ban *Heav'n*, curſe the Great *Gods*, and Fate.
And yet I will not ſpeak, the theam's too ſtern;
Here Hell it ſelf might witty horror learn.
Some *whirl-wind* ſnatch me headlong through the *Ayr*,
Wrapt round with clouds invelop'd in deſpair,
That I from Earth may hide this diſmal deed:
Honour is ſtabb'd, and all the Virtues bleed.
Cyara's ſlain, *Octavia* too is gone;
In Death's damp vaults ſhe wanders all alone:
I ſaw her Soul dive ſtrangely through the ground,
In her own blood that ſpark of *Heav'n* was drown'd:
Treaſon againſt the *Gods* he did conſpire;
Oh Traytor, worſe than he that ſtole their fire!
Nero. Who was that Traytor, *Prince?*
Brit. I know not, *Sir*,
Unleſs that Dog that was her Murderer.
Nero. Who was that Dog?

Brit.

Brit. Why, *Cerberus* I gues;
No Savage else could hurt such gentleness.
Such meekness would wilde *Panthers* fury charm,
And hungry Lyons of their rage disarm;
Ev'n o're their prey, it would the conquest get,
Quell their swoln hearts, and cool their bloody heat.
Nero. Madman begone.
Brit. This madman is a *Prince.*
Nero. I say again, forbear this insolence,
Or thou shalt wish thou wert a Beggar born:
At once, thou mov'st my pity and my scorn.
Brit. Twas you that kill'd my Sister.
Nero. Ha! thou lyst:
Stand not my rage; for, if thou dost, thou dy'st.
Brit. Then I will sit, and hear your Thunder roar;
Such humble shrubs it hurts not, but flyes o're.
Nero. But you shall find, for once, 'twill condescend:
I pity thee, and will thy sorrows end.
Cya. Hold; by the *Gods*, I do conjure you, stay:
First through my bosom force your bloody way.
In policy you ought his life to spare;
For, if you let him live, *Heav'n* will forbear
To punish you, nor will due vengeance take;
The just good *Gods* will spare you, for his sake.
Brit. How the Boy prattles! 'tis a pretty Boy!
Cyara's Image! how that damps my Joy!
What mean these two, by such an antick form?
Here's a soft calm, and there a blustring storm.
My Painter so shall draw me day and night:
Here horrid darkness stands; there, gaudy light:
There, cruelty, like the red Sea appears;
Here, melting mercy flows in pitying tears.
Exquisite Emblems! perfect good and evil:
A *Heav'n*, a Hell, an *Angel*, and a Devil.
Nero. If I gaze long, I shall my nature lose:
Mid'st of my full carreer, I stop and muse.

Whence

Whence does this poor unworthy pause proceed?
Can I repent my rage? No, he shall bleed.
Cya. Hold *Sir*, you cannot strike.
Nero. How? cannot, Boy?
Cya. Alas, I ly'd; I know you can destroy:
You can do all things, *Sir*, both drown and burn;
Nay, the whole World to its first Chaos turn.
You are a *God* to damn, a *King* to kill:
You can do all things, if had the will.
But you are kind, and soft; I know you are;
Your eyes are Noble, and delight to spare.
O *Heav'n*! how Men will lye! nay, now I find
You have a gentle, Great, and GOD-like mind.
The Prince is Mad, and you are pleas'd to see't,
Nay pardon all, — O let me kiss your feet.
You'll win all hearts, by such kind acts as these;
With my warm tears I'le bath your sacred knees.
Nero. Shall I be branded with the name of good?
Begone, thou soft invader of my blood;
Mercy and I, no correspondence have;
Pity's a whining tender-hearted slave:
Fury I love, because she's bold and brave.
As I scan things, Virtue's the greatest crime:
Stand off; or I will pass through thee, to to him.

[*Kills her.*]

Pop. Hold, *Cæsar*, now I take you at your word;
If you will keep your promise, sheath your sword.
Nero. 'Twere less to give the world, than let him live;
Yet your commands with Joy I do receive.
Brit. What barbarous hand has done this horrid deed?
Oh, my dear Boy, look up; thou dost not bleed.
Stop, stop, thou bloody Spring; my hair perforce
Shall bind thee, and damn up the Scarlet source:
I will my self thy kind Phisician be;
When I was sick, thou still wert so to me:

At my bed side, strict watch all night he'ld keep,
And, with his Songs, rock my dull cares a sleep.
His cheeks are pale! Roses, look forth again,
And smile for Joy your pretty Rival's slain.
Fate wove thy thred of life too fine to last.
All's lost at once! O Sad! O desp'rate cast!
Thus, in my arms, I'le bear thy beauty's hence;
No guilty hand shall touch thy innocence:
Thus, arm in arm, we in one grave will lye;
Wretched we liv'd, but happy we will dye.

[*Exit with Cyara.*]

Pop. What means my trembling heart by this surprize?
Why do I sigh? why do these blushes rise?
Before my soul, a mournful Troop appears;
Hopes stifled in their birth, starts sudden fears
Languishing Joys, and solitary tears!
I love him; 'tis too plain: Just *Heav'n* has sent
On my inconstancy this punishment
I've gone too far to think of a return;
I must enjoy him: O my heart does burn!
My blood boils high, and beats with strange desires:
'Tis just that madness mingle with such fires.

[*Exit.*

Nero. Thou hast a Wit; some sudden means contrive.
Pet. Believe me, *Sir*, this night he sha'nt survive.

[*Exit Nero* &c.

Solus. Contrivance gives a mischief gloss — 'tis fine:
I ha't — my kinsman *Burrhus* fills his wine;
By nature bloody — then the pow'rful charm
Of gold, a present gain, no future harm,
Safe in the Emp'ror's favour he shall live:
All this well weigh'd, my black design must thrive.
Nature has not been overkind to me;
Her *limber* Sons and I cannot agree:
She is my Stepdame; but my comfort is,
To pay her home, this night her darling dyes. *Exit.*

Scan.

Scæ. II.

Otho, Piſo.

Piſo. YEt be adviſ'd, and let us end this ſtrife.

Oth. Deny thy words, and I will ſpare thy life.

Piſo. Deny my words? what didſt thou ever ſee
In all my life, to raiſe this thought in thee?
My Nature's hot, provoke me, *Sir*, no more:
I do prononce again ſhe is a whore.

Otho. Blaſphemer, Peace; rage does my heart-ſtrings tear:
Wert thou my Father, I could not forbear.

Piſo. Sir, I dare Fight.

Otho. Guard well thy Life.

Piſo. I do.
This ſport was ne'r unwelcom until now.

[*Fight.*]

You bleed.

Otho. No matter, *Sir*, the wound's but ſlight.

Piſo. O, Brother, hear me, for I will not Fight.

Otho. You muſt.

Piſo. I cannot. *Heav'ns*! what have I done?

Otho. Thou art a coward; pr'ythee, Boy, begone.

Piſo Curſe on my hand that drew your preious blood!
Poppea is an *Angel*, chaſte and good:
I'le flatter you; I care not what I ſay,
Rather than ſtill purſue this fatal fray.

Otho. Now I believe what thou haſt ſaid is true;
Pity has done what anger could not do:
O, ſhe is falſe, forſworn, and I am loſt,
My Soul is ſhip-wrack'd on its moſt lov'd coaſt;
By thy Victorious mercy I'm undone.
Go, Noble brother, leave this wretch alone;
O, my heart's ſick! your pardon, pray no more;
Here I will lie, and my hard hap deplore.

Piſo. Then I will ſit for ever by your ſide
Take it not ill, if I this tameneſs chide;
Rouſe up your wrath, let anger chaſe away
Theſe ſullen clouds; Revenge will bring the day
Again, and make your honour ſhine more bright,
While it damns her to ſhades of death and night.
Otho. Ha! thou haſt wak'd my Soul from its dull reſt;
Revenge, thou gen'rous fire, enrich my breſt.

Poppea paſſes over the Stage.

O glorious Whore! I'le ſink her with a blow,
She's rotten ripe for ruin; let me go.
Piſo. You ſee her guards will your Revenge oppoſe,
And thus, for nothing, we our lives ſhall loſe.
Otho. Down, down, my ſwelling heart; O, I am ſad:
Hold, my weak eyes; this ſight has made me mad.
Piſo. Blinded with rage, our Reaſon's apt to ſtray:
Be rul'd by me; I'le ſhew the ſafeſt way.

Exeunt.

Scæ III.

Britannicus reading, *Poppea* enters.

Pop. Muſing, and all alone? *Syllana*, go;
The bottom of my Fate I'le quickly know:
My Virtues are dethron'd, and paſſions rule;
O *Heav'ns*! my crimes you have reveng'd at full.
Brit. It is a truth? or does Fame tell us lyes,
When it reports that the Soul never dyes,
But wantled ſits, and acts in gloomy ſhrouds,
Like *Cynthia*, when ſhe's hemm'd with circling clouds?

When

When the ſoft partner of our griefs and joyes,
With trembling hands ſhall cloſe our dying eyes,
When in ſad ſort our friends ſhall ſtand and mourn,
To ſee the Fatal torch thoſe reliſts burn,
Is there an end of thought? no farther care?
No throne of bliſs, nor caverns of deſpair?
No dens of darkneſs, nor no ſeats of Glory?
Then all our grave diſcourſe is but a ſtory:
Some full-gorg'd Prieſt, nodding beneath a ſhade,
Tales of *Elizium*, and the dull pool, made.
Whither, O whither, go we, when we dye?
Why, there where babes not yet conceiv'd do lie?
Death's nothing; nothing after death will fall;
Time, and dark *Chaos*, will devour us all.

Pop. I come to kill thee, Prince.

Brit. My Boy is dead;
To *Heav'ns* bright Throne his brighter Soul is fled:
Yonder he mounts on ſilver burniſh'd wings;
Each *God*, immortal ſweets around him flings.
Now, like a ſhip, he cuts the liquid Sky;
His Rigging's Glorious, and his Maſt is high;
Fan'd with cool winds his Golden colours fly.
Ha! wilt thou follow him? begin: ſtrike home.

Pop. I ſay, to kill thee (*Prince*) I hither come.
Thy eyes ſharp beams have run quite through my heart,
And I, on thine, will thus revenge the ſmart.

Brit. Strike, and by *Heav'n* I'le kiſs thee for the blow:
Be quick; my blood is black, and full of woe:
Do me this welcome dangerous cruelty,
Fair Murdreſs, if thou art my enemy.

Pop. Nay, ſure you flater'd, when you term'd me fair.

Brit. If Lillyes, ſnow, and light, be ſuch, you are.

Pop. If I am ſo, this deed would make me foul,
And caſt eternal ſpots upon my ſoul;
Therefore, thou horrid inſtrument, be gone:
Without thy help, alas, I am undone.
I faint.

Brit.

Brit. VVithin my arms I'le hold thee, till
Thy Soul return, and greedy death beguile.
In Rosy gales life through her lips does stream.
Pop. VVhy did you wake me from this golden dream?
Oh, I am sick!
Brit. I am contagious, sure;
And all that touch me dye.
Pop. You are my cure:
'Tis only in your power to make me live.
From those lov'd eyes let me this Balm receive.
Within this circle let me ever grow.
Brit. Thou charmer, speak; what wouldst thou have me do?
Pop. Something — why, thus to press your hand, that's all.
Heav'n how he shakes! why do you tremble, Prince?

Cyara's Ghost.

Brit. Ha! what art thou? thou ayry phantasm, hence.
O, *Gods*! it is my Boy: what would'st thou have?
How cold he looks, just ris'n from the grave!
Cya. Go not to bed, but fly that Sorceress arms;
She tempts, like *Circe*, and has deadly charms.
Think on *Cyara*, for she lov'd thee well:
Take heed, beware; thou'rt in the Rode to Hell.

Exit.

Brit. Stay, I conjure thee stay, leave me not thus,
If thou did'st ever love *Britannicus*.
I'le follow thee along thy Ayay track,
And mount above the clouds to fetch thee back.

Exit.

Enter Sylvana with a Taper.

Silva. O *Heav'ns*! How do you, *Madam*? what success?
Pop. I'le tell thee, Killing woe, and deep distress.
Thy arm my Girl; I'le shew thee e're we part
Sad things: a troubled mind, and wounded heart.

Ah!

Ah! for my former peace, what would I give?
My comfort is, this ſhame I ſhame I ſha'nt ſurvive.
Oh diſmal change! nothing is conſtant found;
The *Gods*, with *whirl-winds*, drive our Fortunes round.

Exeunt

Scæ IV.

Nero, *ſleeping in a Couch*; Caligula's *Ghoſt appears.*

Ghoſt. FRom the Infernal cave, the wide, the low
Abyſs, the direful pit of endleſs woe,
On which each God that looks ſcarce keeps his State,
But, giddy grown, turns and takes hold of Fate,
Caligula, in vapors wrapt, does come,
Nero, thy friend, and the ſworn foe of *ROME*.
Not Hell's more dreadful, than theſe hated walls;
The ſtygian waves, and *Terrbene* water's falls,
Alike with fear confound my troubled Soul,
And ſprinkle equal horrors as they rowl.
By Traytors hands I fell: O that I could,
For every drop they ſhed, Spill Seas of blood.
Oh *Heav'n*, I'de do what cannot be expreſt!
VVith raging Plagues I'de fill each *Roman* breſt:
Burn Palaces: like Thunder, I would rave,
Tear the tall woods, and rend each Sacred Grove.
But oh! by pow'rful Fate I am confin'd
And muſt not reak the madneſs of my mind.
Nero, Act thou, what can't be done by me,
Thy Genius, I, will aid thy cruelty:

VVith

With my pale hand I ſtrook thy troubled ſenſe;
All poyſon Hell contains I do diſpenſe;
The ſcum of *Lethe*, with *Alecto's* gall,
Megera's ſweat, ſhall on thy vitals fall;
Errinnis ſhall about thy heart-ſtrings twine;
Yet all's too little for our great deſign.
Lo, I am warn'd; ſee where fierce Envy ſtands,
And ſummons me, by *Pluto's* dread commands.
Go on, be mad; no more I muſt be gone,
And vaniſh, like the light when day is done.

Nero, Solus.

VVhere have I been? thou Dæmon of the night
Return; I'm rack'd with this appalling ſight,
The forked tongues of Furyes can't expreſs
The rage that burns within me: Sulphur's leſs;
Not Hell it ſelf ſo full of dread appears;
Not Night, nor darker Death, ſuch horror wears;
Not the deſtructive force of wind, and fire,
VVhen ſome great City's ruin they conſpire;
Not the devouring Sea, when *Neptune* makes
The Sea-*Gods* drunk, and draughts of ruin takes
VVrong'd womens hate, Sword, Famine, Plagues combine;
Your madneſs trebled cannot equal mine:
All you faint emblems of my fury are;
No tender Sex, nor age my wrath ſhall ſpare.

Enter Druſillus bloody.

What news? thy looks declare it to be good,
A haſty joy appears, though dreſt in blood.
Druſ. The rabble, *Sir*, with wine and rage inſpir'd
With Trayt'rous hands your Palace would have fir'd:
Your Guards they did aſſault; but we withſtood
Their heat, and ſoon allay'd it with their blood.
Few ſtrokes were giv'n ere the baſe cowards fled,
Some priſ'ners are, ſome ſcap'd, and ſome are dead.

Nero

Nero. Ha! do they bid me battle? they ſhall die:
At their own weapon I the ſlaves defy.
Nothing but flames can quench my kindled Ire:
Blood's not enough; Fire I'le revenge with fire.
Fierce as young *Phaeton* I will return:
Great *ROME*, the World's Metropolis, ſhall burn.
On *Tyber's* flood new beams I will diſplay,
And turn black Night into a golden Day.
The molten GODS ſhan't ſave their Capital,
Temples ſhall tumble down, guilt roofs ſhall fall:
Bright Ruin, with a noiſe ſhall ſwallow all.

Finis Actus quarti.

Exeunt.

Act. V. Scæ. I.

Britannicus, Flavius, Attendants.

Brit. FIre, fire, I'm all one flame, fly, my friends fly,
Or I ſhall blaſt you; O my breath is Brimſtone,
My Lungs are Sulphur, my hot brains boil over;
Or you that needs will ſtay, let your eyes run,
If you did ever love this wretched Prince,
Now mourn, now weep; O, I will catch your tears
And drink the precious drops: I burn, I burn,
Fall, fall, you gentle Rills, you melting ſhow'rs
Call all the winds to fan my furious fires;
Bring the cold North, I'le kiſs his out-blown cheeks,
Upon my flaming breſt I'le lay his head,
And hug him in my heart, for he is cold,

With my hot arms I'le clapſe his froſty limbs,
And twine about him, like a wanton girle.
Oh! oh!

Fla. Can there be *Gods*, and not revenge?
Can they behold this Noble copy of
Their own bright excellence poluted thus,
Thus rent and torn by Sacrilegious hands,
Yet idle ſit, and ſleep upon their Thrones?
The voice of Murder's loud as their own Thunder.
Awake, awake, you drowſy Deityes!
Here is a ſight ſo pitifully ſtrange,
'Twould melt the *Scythian's* Soul, who ſtands unmov'd
And Sullen at his Mothers Funeral.
When Fame reports this deed, the rugged Moore
will ſtand abaſh'd, and groan to hear it told,
Break, break, my heart: Oh you great GODS of *ROME*,
Where are you all? Is this my welcome home?

Brit. Ha! de does weep! nay, pry'thee do not hide it;
By *Heav'n*, thou art my friend: lend me thy ſtore;
My eyes ſhall pay thee uſe, truſt me they ſhall;
Here, in my boſome, lay thy pearly ſtock;
Heav'ns, how he weeps! thou art a Virgin ſure.
Fall, you dear drops; Oh let me hug thee cloſe:
My Spirits are quite parch'd up, my palat's dry;
Th' Elizian ſhades are cool: oh, let me dye.

Flav. Sir, I am *Flavius*; have you quite forgot me?

Brit. I do remember thee; I lov'd thee well:
Thou art a Noble youth, the child of Honour.

Flav. From *France* I come, and bring important news.

Brit. Ha! hold, I'le tell thee news: *Octavia's* dead;
She's cold, alas but I am hot as fire.
You amiable floods, when do you ſtray?
Oh, come, and quench me, quench my raging flames.

Fla. O Hear me, *Heav'ns*! hear me, you Juſt great *Gods*.
If ſtill Your ears are open to our Pray'rs,
If yet you hold commerce with mortal ſighs,

If

If yet the vows of humble Souls are heard,
Oh now look down, and hear my ſhort addreſs:
No ſort of ſuſtenance will I receive,
Nor ſhall the ſparkling bowl ſalute my lips,
Nor drowny ſleep viſit my weary eyes,
E're I the author of this Murder know.

Brit. Tis like thee; thou wert alwayes a true friend.
In a bright flaming Chariot I'le aſcend.
Cyara, Oh *Octavia*, my dear loves,
You Queens of Innocence, you ſpotleſs Doves,
Meet me, I come. *Flavius*? nay, pry'thee nigher;
Thus, in thy arms, let me, kind youth, expire.

[*Dyes.*]

Fla. Farewel, bright Soul! thou Royal Excellence!
Rare union! Grandeur joyn'd with Innocence!
The Fates of wicked Men are groſs and ſlow;
Thine mov'd apace: —but I forgot my vow.

Enter Petronius, Burrhus, with Guards.

Bur. 'Tis done, my Lord, ne'r doubt it.

Petr. What is he?

Bur. 'Tis *Flavius*, new returned from *France*, he came
Juſt as the Prince had drunk the poyſon'd wine.

Petr. That was not quite ſo well, for he is honeſt;
But take no notice: where's the Prince—give way.
How came he dead? I charge you ſpeak, anſwer me.
Lay hold of all, in the name of the Emperour.

Fla. Hands off, I will declare the author of
This horrid Murder. Speak, who fill'd his wine?

Bur. That, *Sir*, did I.

Fla. Then thou art his Murderer.
Start not, baſe villain, black as thou art, the Prince
With his laſt Noble breath did pardon thee,

Bur. Sir, I was Order'd——

Fla. Ha! is it then a truth?

Bur. I know not; but ——

Fla. Thou ly'ſt; it is too true.
Guilt, and diſtraction, ſit upon thy brow:
And 'tis as true that thou ſhalt dye for't, villain.

[*Draws.*]

Petr. Hold, *Sir*: by what authority dare you do this?

Fla. Why, by the *Gods*, by friendſhip, Juſtice, all:
I'le anſwer thee no farther.

Petr. Ha! forbear.
Take him or kill him, Guards, I do Command you.

Flavius beats down *Petronius*, and kills *Burrhus*: the Guards diſarm him.

Fla. Pardon, you *Gods*, my former blaſphemy;
O you are Juſt, and I adore your powers
Now lead me where you pleaſe, to life or death,
Let me but pay my laſt obſervance here,
My vow I have perform'd; and thou, dear Prince,
Art in ſome part reveng'd: what my poor power
Could poſſibly effect, is done; the reſt
Belongs unto the *Gods*.

Petr. Remove the bodyes,
And bring him away.

Exeunt.

Scæ. II.

Plautus, Mirmilon.

Plau. HEar you the news?
Mir. Not I: you ſeem amaz'd.
Plau. A *Currier* from beyond the *Alps* arriv'd
Reports the *French* are all in Arms, reſolv'd

To bring the War ev'n to the gates of *ROME*.
Fierce *Vindex* heads the Rebels, and all *France*
Contributes largely: this the Emperour hears,
And laughs; slights them, and swears he'll hang 'em all.
The people mutiny in every street;
Their tongues are Lawless; nay, they Murmur loud:
Some modestly retire to corners, where
They curse and damn him, call him parricide,
A burner of their houses, friends, and *Gods*,
Lo where he comes; the Lion's rous'd, his eyes
Look red with anger, Lightning flashes in them:
What Thunder follows? Let's stand by and hear.

Nero, *Flavius*, Guards,

Fla. Was't not well done? I did his Murd'rer kill.
Nero. Know, hardy fool, he suffer'd by my will:
I hated him, and did his death contrive
Now, villain, think how long thou hast to live.
Fla. To live? Oh who would live, thy humor's slave?
A torment worse than blackest Devils have.
Let parasites, the moths of Grandeur, fawn,
These guilded canker-worms, ambition's spawn:
I do despise thee, Tyrant as thou art;
There's nothing great, nor Manly in thy heart.
Nero. Are you so hot? I'le alter your fierce tone.
Plautus, go burn the villain; see it done.
Fla. Midst of devouring flames, I will despise
All that the Master Devil thou,
Or the black crew of lesser Fiends devise:
Thou shalt not hear a groan till I expire;
But then I'le shout defyance from the fire,
Smile at the shock of death, and to the *Gods* retire

Exeunt.

Enter

Enter Petronius.

Petr. Dread *Sir*, two Meſſengers who come from *Spain*,
Report that *Galba* does new Wars maintain;
Heads the revolted Troops, and joyns with *France*;
The *Germans* too come in, and all advance
Againſt Your Majeſty.
Nero. I'le hear no more.
Is *Galba* falſe?
Petr. They call him Emperour.
Nero. They do; but what's the name, without the pow'r?
Let him come on; this arm ſhall ſtrike him dead,
And ſnatch his borrowed Laurels from his head.
Petr. Your Treaſures are conſum'd with late expence.
Nero. His gather'd Sums ſhall help that indigence.
Petr, Time flies; 'tis fit your wiſdom had deſign'd —
Nero. Do you conſult, while I my pleaſures mind.
Oh my *Poppæa*, where art thou retir'd?
Never was bleſſing.
So oft enjoy'd; yet ſtill ſo much deſir'd.

Exeunt.

Scæn. III.

Popepa, Piſo, and *Otho,* liſtening.

Pop. ARe they both dead? *Piſo* and *Otho* too?
Piſo. I ſaw 'em firſt oppoſe the pyrat's rage,
With numbers, ſcorning death, they did engage;
The GOD of battels bluſh'd as he look'd on,
Envying the juſt applauſe theſe *Heroes* won.

Pop.

Pop. Virtue is ſtill by violence oppreſt.
How his eyes ſparkle! Pray relate the reſt.

Piſo. I have my ſelf the doubtful hazard ſtood
Of fifteen battles, plung'd in waves of blood,
The dreadful caſt on Fortune's bank I threw,
Life was my lot; yet ſtill in all my view
Of wounds, of War, and death, I never ſaw
Such pleaſing horror, ſuch delightful awe,
Such mighty force and art together laid;
Never was Game of death ſo bravely play'd:
At laſt, O that I live ſuch news to tell!
With conqu'ring tir'd, theſe Sons of Valour fell.

Pop. Oh pow'r of Love! his words my Soul invade!
Sure 'tis ſome GOD, delighting in a ſhade:
The Glories of his eyes, like Stars in night,
Or mourning Beauties, charm my wounded ſight.
Since Honours are by *Ceſar*, round my hurl'd,
Since I am made the Empreſs of the World,
Since all's my choice, why do I doubtful ſtand,
And wiſh a pleaſure which I may command?
If, when I dye, I muſt to torments go,
'Tis fit no time be loſt; let pleaſures flow.
Fancy its eager appetite ſhall cloy;
Let reſolution Holy qualms deſtroy;
Henceforth, what e're I like, I will enjoy.

Exit beckoning *Piſo*.

Otho, Soliloquy.

O Hell! her crimes thy horror cannot match:
Be ſwift, my Sword, her luſt and life diſpatch.
This key unlocks all doors throughout the Court.
Are you ſo wanton? Yes you ſhall have ſport.
How am I Rob'd of all I ever lov'd!
My ſoul is heavy, and would be remov'd.
Once ſhe was fair, the ſofteſt, ſweeteſt wife,
My heart's lov'd Joy, the Jewel of my life;

Had

Had she stood so, how happy had I been!
But she's fallen, and Glories in her sin.
Ah, the whole Sex is naught, false, and unkind;
Falser than flatt'ring Seas, or fleeting wind:
With panting hopes and fears they rack our breast,
Snatch our soft sleeps, and ravish down our rest:
Oh, they are skill'd, practis'd in paint and art;
Smile in our face, and stab us to the heart.
Yet we see all, think nothing is unspy'd
While they like Serpents, on their bellies glide,
And leave no Print behinde our search to guide. } *Exit.*

Poppea, Piso.

Piso. War is my Mistress; here I am unfit:
Love's chaplet misbecoms a Warrior's head;
I cannot cringe, my nerves too firm are knit;
These limbs ne'r lay upon a silken bed.
Can you, that are the World's great Empress, take
Delight in the embraces of a slave?

Pop. The *Sun*, for thy lov'd cheek, did *Heav'n* forsake;
Why should not I the like advantage have?
From a bright Orb of Glory I'le descend,
And in thy gloomy Cell make my abode:
No more a slave; henceforth thou art my friend:
A Cottage has, ere now, receiv'd a GOD.

Piso. Who ever knew Night mingle with the Day?

Pop. Nothing agrees with Love so well as Night;
Hush'd, and in darkness hid, the bashful play,
And, happy as the bold, ravish delight:
The most obdurate, are by kindness won.
Your touches charm; nay, why do you withdraw?
Grow thus, like a soft cloud upon the *Sun*;
My pow'rful flame thy Icy fears will thaw.

Piſa. Your Grandeur aws me; yet, why ſhould I fear?
Somthing there is which my blood ſtrangely moves;
I am your ſlave; but are we private here?

Pop. As Hermits in their Cells, or *Gods* in groves.

Piſa. Why did you name the *Gods*? that Sacred ſound
The force of Thunder bears, and turns my blood;
My Spirits fly low, yet with your touch rebound,
Like wanton Swallows, when they kiſs the flood.

Pop. Such fears unworthy are my blood or Throne;
Give me a Fancy fixt to its delight:
Tremblings and ſtarts the fearful well may own;
The valiant ſtill refuſe a diſtant fight.

Enter Otho.

Otho. Here's one that fain would try your mighty Art:
What mean you? ere the Fight's begun, you ſtart.

Pop. Night, horror, death! Ah, whither ſhall I fly?

Otho. Can you be valiant, and yet fear to dye?

Pop. Thus, at your feet, let me one moment grow;
A little reſpite for my Soul allow.
Repentance ſeizes on each vital part,
And ſerions grief clings about my heart;
Yet, ere I dye, let me my thoughts declare,
O you are wrong'd; my ſtill loved Lord, you are:
Your bed's defild, and I am all one ſtain;
But yet my blood may wath me white again.
By killing me, you only can forgive;
I am ſo wicked, that I would not live.
In pity ſay this of me, when 'Im dead,
She was not eaſily to ruin led;
'Twas not a common Crown her virtue bought;
But mighty Glory with great Courtſhip wrought;
Then ſhe was young:
This, *Sir*, perhaps, may mitigate my fault.

Oth. Her cunning tongue retains its wonted charms.
Peace, *Syren*, and hold off thy guilty arms,
I feel a gentle load drop on my feet.
Look, *Piſo*, I ſuſpect, but dare not ſee't.

Piſo Oh, do not, *Sir*: my eyes, by chance, did ſtray
And half my reſolution's ta'en away.
She weeps, ſhe weeps! *Gods!* who would not admire
To ſee ſuch floods riſe from a Spring of fire?

Otho. Yes, I will ſee her: O thou falſe one, ſpeak;
For thou ſhalt die,
Though, will the Fatal ſtroke, my own heart break.
Look up, ſeek not to hide thy known diſgrace;
But ſhew thy fair, thy falſe, thy once lov'd face.
Oh anſwer me, what have I ever done
That thou ſhould'ſt uſe me thus? ceaſe thy vain moan,
And ſpeak, or practice o're thy mournful art,
And ſob an anſwer. Oh my troubled heart!

Pop. Yes, I will ſpeak, my Noble Lord, I will;
'Tis but a ſhort requeſt,: be kind, and kill.
Your words, like Daggers, through my breſt make way;
A thouſand deaths you give me by delay.
This one laſt look. -- Oh put me out of pain;
I'le ſpeak no more;
Nor ſhall my eyes e'er look forth again.

Otho. A mortal agony invades my blood;
Somthing now whiſpers me, ſhe may be good;
And ſhall we blaſt young Virtue in the bud?
An Earth-quake's here, all in confuſion Toſt,
In the diſorder too, Revenge is loſt.

Piſo. Here you ſhall find it; let me give the blow.
Otho. Thou art ſo haſty ſtill.
Piſo. And you as ſlow.
Oth. She ne'r offended thee; I charge you hold,
Piſo. His old love burns again.
Oth. Alas, I'm cold.

Compassion this last ardency did move;
Twas the effect of pity, not of Love.

Enter Nero.

Nero. The *Empress* dying? hold thy bloody hand.
Piso. If thou wouldst save her life, I charge thee stand;
The bound of thy Progression there shall be;
When e're thou stirr'st,
She takes a step to immortality.
Nero. Shall I be brav'd by a black Dog, a Slave?
Hold, hold; my Pardon, on my knees humbly thus I crave.
Stiff as an *Elephant*, I cannot bend;
My little fault, let this submission mend.
Piso. You stirr'd an inch; 'tis vain to weep or Pray.
Nero. Thou Son of Night, pernicious creature, stay:
I'th' name of all the *Gods*, Oh, let her live;
Let me this bounty, on my knees, receive,
And thou, in all my Glories, shalt have share;
Thy sooty hand shall the World's Scepter bear,
And *Diamond* wreaths shall round thy temples mourn,
And *Pearly* threds thy Jetty neck adorn.
Piso. Just as you move, my Justice shall proceed.
She shall not dye this time, though she must bleed.

Stabs her in the Arm.

Nero. What hast thou done?
Piso. Not much: your posture keep,
And stir not, lest I make a wound more deep.
Nero. Behold I'm fix'd: thou art not humane sure,
O, mighty Love!
'Tis for thy sake, I this disgrace endure:

Had'ſt thou a Generous Soul, thou could'ſt not ſee
The Lord O'th' world thus long upon his knee.
Piſo. Like a Tall Tree, to dull Earth thou ſhalt grow;
You were a mighty God a while a goe,
And 'tis my Pride to make your Godhead bow.
Nero. I cannot ſuffer this. Awake, my Soul,
Let haughty rage all thoughts of Love controul.
Piſo. Nay, then 'tis time: Brother ſtrike home.
Otho. I have.
May all her faults be buried in her grave.
Nero. Hence, from my ſight; the ſlaves to torments bear;
Mark me, let 'em be dying all the Year,
Tortures in this ſmall Book you may explore,
The Rack, the Wheel, *Phalaris* Bull; nay more;
With care, turn all the bloody pages o're:
On fiery brazen pavements let 'em run,
Their eye-lids ſnatch, let them Face the Sun.
'S death, dare you ſtay? begone, I will not hear
A word; - what need I thus my Spirits tear?
My looks hereafter ſhall my mind declare,
Where is the Empreſs? bring her to my bed.
Plau. The Empreſs, ſaid you, Sir? Alas ſhe is dead.
Nero. Villain, thou ly'ſt; go pull his tongue out, haſte;
I'le ſee the roots on't; fly, h' has ſpoke his laſt.
Who anſwers now? Statues, By *Heav'n*! All dull?
Mir. If ſhe were dead ——
Nero. What then, Sententious fool?
If ſhe were dead, I would reſtore her breath,
And ſhe ſhould live,
Spight of her ſelf, ſpight of the Gods, and Death.
My Pow'r's unlimited, as is their own:
My ſmile brings Life, and death attends my frown.
My Empices bounds Nature alone does make;
The Sun his lodging in my Sea does take,
The grateful God too owns the mighty debt,
Thaws me down clouds, and payes me gen'rous heat.

If she were dead?
Curse o' your cringing and base flattery;
Ye are lyars all: hence, from my presence fly.

Enter Messenger.

Drus. Lost, and undone: fly *Sacred Sir*, you'r lost:
Galba is just arriv'd upon our Coast;
With four score thousand strong he beats the way,
The treacherous Senate too their trust betray;
Through all the Streets Proclaim him Emperour;
But call you Tyrant, curse your Name and Pow'r.
Exit.

Mir. Flie, flie, dread Sir; flie from this fatal ground;
The base *Plebeians* have beset you round:
Petronius, who a while sustain'd their heat,
I saw, all bloody, from the walls retreat
Otho, and *Piso*, from your Guards are freed
All *ROME* applauds them for this last great Deed.
Exit.

Enter Petronius staggering.

Nero. Speak, my true friend; I'le be advis'd by you;
What more remains, in these extreams, to do?

Petr. With faithful truth, Sir, I have serv'd you long:
Yours was the right, I did my self the wrong;
But now it matters not, 'twas Loyalty,
And, as I liv'd, I in your service dye.
My counsel is, you by your own hand bleed;
The *Senate* has some base poor death decreed.
Death's but a name; by my example fall:
I fear no lakes, nor *Stygian* Frogs; that's all.
[*Dies.*]

Nero. O Gods! but wherefore name I these feign'd powr's?
The Elements, the Seasons, Days, and hours,
Were alwayes as they are, and will be so,
And Nature her eternal round will go.

The Gods when we're awake their *Dæmons* keep
At home, and only fright us when we sleep.
I would the utmost know of Destiny,
And therefore, dying, do their pow'rs defie
If they have any Thunder, let it come;
I'le stand the heavy shock, and brave my doom.
Down all at once--Ha! whence proceeds this noise? (*Thunder*)
If there be Gods, sure this must be their voice.
Speak on, talk lowder yet. What shapes are these?
O dismal Scene of death! my Arteries.
Tremble, and nature sinks beneath her weight.
I know you all: smile on, Thou art my Fate.
What God was't hung thee there? He is my friend:
By thee, he points me out a noble end.

[*Dies.*]

Otho, *Piso*, Attendants.

Otho. 'Tis he, and as it seems, by himself slain.
ROME's Sacred *Genius*, now look forth again;
Come from thy shroud, show thy Majestick head;
Direct our Joyes, the dreadful Tyrant's dead.
Piso. Let's to the *FORUM* haste, and there proclaim
A mighty donative in *Galba*'s name.
With all the Pomp 'Oth' Court his Camp wee'll meet,
And his approach with Joyful shoutings greet:
Proclaim him Emperour with Trumpets Sound
While he, now made a God, shall scorn the ground,
And, on our shoulders ride, with Lawrels Crown'd.

FINIS.

The Epilogue ſpoken by Mr. *Harris.*

HOW dull, how grave, and how preciſe ye ſit,
As if ye had acted Love, not taſted wit.
When the Trick's done, like Wine unſtop'd yee pall
After enjoyment, thus it's with yee all,
Your modiſh Playes like jaunty Miſſes ſhew'd,
Be bravely dreſt, high flown, more fine than good
For Cloaths attract yee more than fleſh and blood.
Like cover'd viands Beauties hid from ſight,
Raiſe drooping fancy up to new delight.
For you Gallants, ye gay brisk witty Men,
He knows your killing trade, your damning ſtrain;
Ye can as well Wenches and drink reſtrain:
Yet faith for my ſweet ſake be kind to night,
Or may this heavy curſe upon ye light;
May each Gallant that has an aſſignation,
Be jilted after four hours expectation;
Or if the masked Gentlewoman come
Spight of long Scarff, may ſhe be dogg'd from home:
May ye——
In height of Titilation hear a rapping,
And then the jealous Cuckold take ye napping.